

## HOW LOW WAGES AND LONG HOURS HELP DRIVE GIRLS INTO THE UNDERWORLD

### *The Relation Between Economic Conditions and the Social Evil Shown in a Powerful and Convincing Argument by the Chicago Vice Commission.*

One of the most interesting and helpful features of the report of the Chicago Vice Commission is that which shows the intimate relation between low wages and long working hours and the Social Evil.

What the Vice Commission says on this subject may help many people to understand and appreciate the valuable service being rendered humanity by organized labor in its persistent and determined fight for the shorter work day, a living wage, sanitary working conditions and protection for women and children who work.

The following quotation is from the official report of the Chicago Vice Commission:

**"VII. Undue Nervous Strain From Economic Pressure.**—On the economic side, the whole tendency of modern industrialism is to place too heavy a strain on the nervous system of all classes, men and women alike. How much more serious is this, when the strain is placed on the growing girl at the period of adolescence, when the child has to assume the burden of self-support and self-direction, and often aid in the support of her family.

"An investigation was recently made into the living conditions of 200 respectable working girls, not one among them vicious or immoral, and it was found that only six per cent of them had control of their wages. The rest were obliged to help relatives, either in the house or out of it. The average wage of these 200 women was \$6.00 to \$10.00 a week. It goes without the saying that if you have conditions which make living with comfort impossible for any large number of men and women, some of the men will become criminals and some of the women, prostitutes.

"From these investigations it will be seen that the tradition that women are usually in the labor market for additional spending money, has little foundation in fact. The average girl does not enjoy work outside of her own home, and will not work unless spurred on by the necessity of gaining her daily bread. This is a general rule and does not apply to all cases, such as many high school girls and the higher class of working girls who have considerable ambition and independence of feeling. A student of economic problems says:

"Any investigation which did not involve a full inquiry into hours of labor, the nervous strain caused by machinery and occupations where machinery is employed, operated by women and girls,